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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 000550

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, NE/ARP, AF/SPG

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [UN](#) [QA](#) [CD](#) [SU](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER SUDANESE PM AL MAHDI SPELLS OUT PLAN FOR
SUDAN

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Key Points

-- Former Sudanese PM Sadiq Al Mahdi said a "catastrophic scenario" is unfolding in Sudan that threatens the humanitarian situation in Darfur, the future peace talks and the unity of the country.

-- Al Mahdi is proposing a "National Forum" composed of eight political parties that would help to resolve the crisis by facilitating the transition from the Bashir-led government to a democratically-elected government and designing a legal alternative to the ICC.

-- Al Mahdi told us that there must be a "Regional Security Council" on Sudan that would involve neighbor states in a solution to the crisis in the country. However, he sees no role for the Arab League.

-- According to Al Mahdi, Egypt has not done enough to resolve the situation in Sudan because it is "too cautious" and "overly sympathetic" to the Government of Sudan (GOS), but Al Mahdi is working to facilitate an Egyptian-Sudanese civil society dialogue to address the crisis in Sudan.

-- Al Mahdi stated that the USG must play a pragmatic role in helping to resolve the situation in Sudan because it is a permanent member of the UNSC.

12. (C) Comment: Al Mahdi is a very astute political actor. He has a vision to save Sudan and felt that the U.S. must play a role in this process. Al Mahdi contrasted USG interaction with Sudan over the past 15 years, and highlighted the Bush Administration's success of using "practical engagement" that involved all relevant parties in negotiations. Like other Sudanese leaders, such as Minni Minawi and Darfur rebel leaders, Al Mahdi uses his Cairo office as a base for diplomatic and media outreach because he feels free to share his opinions without the threat of Sudanese government reprisal.

Government of Sudan Lacks Direction

13. (C) Former Sudanese PM Sadiq Al Mahdi told Polmincons on March 24 that the current situation in Sudan is a "catastrophic scenario." He stated that the ICC arrest warrant has "focused everything on Bashir," polarized the country, and exacerbated the already bad situation. Al Mahdi told us that all attention in Khartoum is focused on saving

Bashir from the ICC, but no one is talking about how to resolve the political crisis or address the die economic and humanitarian situation that has seen a 63% reduction in government revenues and unmitigated suffering. He said that the GOS is confused about what to do.

14. (C) Al Mahdi told us that the GOS hoped that sitting down to talks with the JEM in Doha would persuade the ICC to reject the charges against Bashir. However, since this did not materialize, the GOS will not honor its commitment to release JEM prisoners, and there is no longer a commitment to the Doha Talks. Al Mahdi stated that the bilateral nature of the Doha Talks also served to alienate other Darfur leaders such as Abdel Wahid al-Nur and Minni Minawi, and made a comprehensive agreement more remote. He said that the CPA is "in the intensive care unit" because the NCP and SPLM no longer have any confidence in one another. Al Mahdi stated that unless there is significant change, most people have resigned themselves to partition of the country in 2011.

15. (C) Al Mahdi told us that Bashir,s decision to expel the NGO,s is symptomatic of the GOS,s confusion. He said that the NGOs are not solely responsible for information that led to the ICC,s issuance of an arrest warrant. He said that the ICC received information from a variety of sources including official visitors, people inside the regime, and the global network of Darfuris. Al Mahdi said that the GOS cannot replace the resources of the expelled NGOs. He told us that if this was possible, the government would have expelled the organizations long ago.

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A National Forum to Resolve the Crisis

16. (C) Al Mahdi outlined his comprehensive package deal that he believes will lead Sudan's political crisis to a "soft landing." His proposal would facilitate a transition to a post-Bashir era, avoid another conflict that would tear the country apart, and help to preserve Sudanese unity. Al Mahdi,s solution would create a "national forum" that would focus on democratic reform, appoint a national interim government, and design a legal alternative to the ICC. His plan would also involve participation from regional and international governments and organizations.

17. (C) Al Mahdi told us that his national forum would consist of "Group of 8" political parties to stabilize the internal situation in Sudan. The participating parties would include the National Congress Party (NCP), the Sudan People,s Liberation Movement (SPLM), the Democratic Union Party (DUP), the Communist Party, SLA-Minni Minawi, the Eastern Front, Hassan Al Turabi,s National Islamic Front and Al Mahdi,s Umma Party. The Group of 8 needs to address the situation in Darfur and address rebel concerns so the conflict does not spread. The group would work with the NCP to facilitate a transition from the Bashir-led government to a democratically elected government by first appointing an interim national government to lead the country. The interim government will be responsible for the promotion of democratic reforms and the organization of elections. It would also create an indigenous, hybrid court to consider the charges against Bashir.

A Hybrid Court to Address Criminal Charges

18. (C) Al Mahdi said that because of the ICC Bashir is in a "reactive mode," which led to the "unacceptable" decision to expel the NGOs. Al Mahdi wants to change the tenor in the country and remove the focus from Bashir. He believes that there needs to be accountability for crimes committed in Darfur, and is not in favor of any mechanism that would delay

the "accountability process." However, he is also not in favor of handing Bashir over to the ICC. Al Mahdi proposes the formation of a hybrid court to replace the ICC. The court would be based in Khartoum, and would be composed of Sudanese, African and Arab judges that would review criminal charges against Bashir and others, and apply international criminal law.

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Getting Buy-in for his Plan from NCP and Turabi
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¶9. (C) We expressed some skepticism about potential NCP support for the Group of 8. Al Mahdi told us that the NCP has many moderate voices, but they currently are being drowned out by the "protect Bashir" voices. He said that any softness on the ICC issue is viewed as "treason." However, Al Mahdi feels that if the charges can be addressed in the hybrid court format it would change the tenor within the NCP.

He said that if the NCP chooses Bashir could stand for democratic elections, unless he is convicted by the hybrid court. Al Mahdi believes that his brother-in-law, Hassan Al Turabi would play a role in the Group. He said that Turabi currently feels marginalized and vindictive, and is lashing out in a "couldn't care less attitude." However, Al Mahdi is confident that if given an opportunity he could "tuck Turabi into the group."

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Arab League, Egypt and the Regional Role
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¶10. (C) Al Mahdi told us that there must be a "Regional Security Council" on Sudan that would involve neighbor states in a solution to the crisis in the country. He stated that Chad must be part of this council because of the country's close ties to the JEM. He stated that JEM is gearing for regime change in Sudan and therefore Chad must be involved in the regional solution.

¶11. (C) Al Mahdi criticized the Government of Egypt (GOE) for
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not doing enough to help resolve the situation in Sudan. He said that Egypt is "too cautious" and "overly sympathetic" to the GOS because of its concerns for stability, and its fears that if the Egyptian-Sudanese relationship soured the GOS would support the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. However, Al Mahdi said that Egyptian civil society was attempting to play a role in uniting Sudanese parties and civil society. He told us that the Umma Party is working with the Egyptian NDP and other political parties to facilitate an Egyptian-Sudanese dialogue to address the crisis in Sudan. Al Mahdi said that the Arab League is "timid" and has "never resolved anything." He sees no role for the League in helping to bring stability to Sudan because the Arab League sees Bashir as the only source of stability.

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The U.S. and the International Role
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¶12. (C) Al Mahdi told us that the USG must play a major role in helping to resolve the situation in Sudan, especially since it is a permanent member of the UNSC. Al Mahdi stated that ideological solutions to the problems in Sudan were not needed, but he praised the pragmatic role that the Bush Administration played in bringing together the NCP and SPLM to sign the CPA. He encouraged President Obama to be pragmatic on Sudan and work with all Sudanese parties to resolve to crisis in the country.

SCOBAY